

# **MINORITY REPORT FOR THE PLANNING BOARD**

## **2009 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

### **Municipal Parking District**

I oppose this article in the form in which it will be presented because it includes a number of properties in the R-G district. While I do think it makes sense to include the whole of the B-G and B-L districts, I question the reasoning behind including R-G properties at this point in time. The R-G areas to be included are already densely developed, lack sufficient parking, and are on streets that are problematic in terms of whether or not they can accommodate even denser development (for example, North Prospect Street is a narrow, one-way street; Kellogg Avenue has not only residential traffic but commercial and cut-through traffic as well). I am concerned that parking problems that are already present in this area will – if denser development occurs – simply be pushed elsewhere in the downtown area.

As well, the function of parking in a residential district and that in a business/commercial one is fundamentally different. While people should indeed be discouraged from expecting to find parking just a few steps from commercial enterprises, parking next to or near one's residence is not simply a matter of convenience. Loading and unloading groceries, children, elderly and ill members of one's family, pets that need to be rushed to an emergency hospital – these are normal, everyday activities that would become much more complicated – and unnecessarily so – by having to walk several blocks to get one's car, particularly in our wonderful New England weather.

I understand the desire to cut down on the presence and use of cars – and I speak from personal experience, not just theory – but I am concerned that this is not the principal reason that this expansion is being sought. If the intent is really to justify the building of a second parking garage, then this district will be a failure, because it will simply produce an even more congested, noisy, unattractive trafficscape than the one we already have.

I would support an amended version of this article that excludes the R-G properties, and would also support a further examination of the benefits and drawbacks of expanding beyond the central business area of town, before including these and any other residential properties, a push which will be inevitable if this door is opened.

Denise-Renée Barberet  
Planning Board

**B-G and B-VC Lot Frontage**

I oppose this article from a procedural standpoint: It was brought forward at the last minute as a “technical fix,” and in my opinion there has not been sufficient time to think through the benefits, drawbacks, and unintended consequences of such a change. While we indeed wish to increase mixed-use density downtown, I am not sure that eliminating the frontage requirement is a wise idea, particularly in terms of fire safety, and especially when those residential portions of the building will be located on the third floor. I would like to see a practical and fully realized discussion with the Fire Department to see what concerns they have in regard to higher structures being in even closer proximity than they are now. I would also like to see how many buildings downtown currently allow such mixed uses, and what sorts of configurations can happen with existing dimensional requirements and with action taken by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Finally, I am concerned that this amendment was brought forth in response to the request of an individual. This is not to say that it is necessarily a bad idea, but we should remember that the first words of the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Amherst state that zoning is for the welfare of the inhabitants of the town, not that of the individual. This amendment is premature because, due to the rapidity of the presentation of this change, it has not yet been clearly demonstrated that its consequences will truly be ones that benefit the town as a whole.

Denise-Renée Barberet  
Planning Board